

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

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FM AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 877

AMEMBASSY DACCA

AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD

AMEMBASSY KABUL

AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMCONSOL BOMBAY

AMCONSUL CALCUTTA

AMCONSUL MADRAS

USCINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L NEW DELHI 11580

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, IN

SUBJ: MORE ON MRS GANDHI'S ADVISORS

REF: NEW DELHI 10503

SUMMARY: IN ASSESSING THE INFLUENCE OF MRS GANDHI'S ADVISORS ON HER POLICIES, AN OVERRIDING CONSIDERATION IS THAT THE PRIME MINISTER, AFTER A LIFETIME IN OR NEAR THE COCKPIT OF INDIAN POLTICS, CALLS HER OWN SHOTS ON VIRTUALLY ALL MAJOR AND MANY MINOR MATTERS. SANJAY'S SPECIAL POSITION, ANALYZED IN A RECENT AIRGRAM, AND R.K. DHAWAN'S ROLE DESERVE SPECIAL ATTENTION. HER PRESENT POLITICAL ADVISORS, LIKE THEIR PREDECESSORS, MAY EVENTUALLY FADE. THE PRIME MINISTER APPEARS TO BE
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INCREASINGLY TURNING TO THE CONSERVATIVE-ORIENTED

CHIEF MINISTERS OF PUNJAB AND HARAYANA, ZAIL SINGH AND BANSI LAL, FOR CONSULTATIONS ON POLITICAL TOPICS. TECHNOCRATS PAI AND SUBRAMANIAM HAVE HER EAR ON ECONOMIC AFFAIRS, INTELLIGENCE CZAR R.N, KAO AND PARAMILITARY HEAD RUSTONIJI ON SECURITY MATTERS. END SUMMARY.

1. IN PARA 5 REFTEL, WE REPORTED OUR ASSESSMENT THAT MRS GANDHI IS STILL MAKING ALL MAJOR POLICY AND MANY OPERATIONAL DECISIONS HERSELF. THOSE NEXT TO HER MAY ADVISE, URGE OR OTHERWISE ATTEMPT TO GUIDE HER JUDGMENT; HOWEVER, AFTER NINE YEARS IN THE SADDLE AND AFTER A LIFETIME IN OR NEAR THE COCKPIT OF INDIAN POLITICS, SHE MORE THAN EVER IS CALLING HER OWN SHOTS. THE ADVISORS AROUND HER, PARTICULARLY SANJAY AND DHAWAN, ARE REALLY TRUSTED LOYALISTS WHOSE CONTINUING PROXIMITY TO THE PRIME MINISTER IS BASED ON FAMILIAR OR CLOSE PERSONAL TIES. SHE CONSULTS WITH THEM, AND ENTRUSTS THEM WITH POLITICAL ASSIGNMENTS. AS WE NOTED REFTEL, APART FROM SANJAY, WE JUDGE THAT NO ONE IN THIS INNER CIRCLE HAS THE POTENTIAL TO EXPAND HIS INDIVIDUAL INFLUENCE BEYOND THESE LIMITATIONS. SANJAY'S SPECIAL POSTION IS ANALYZED IN DETAIL IN A RECENT AIRGRAM.

2. R.K. DHAWAN: AS WE MENTIONED REFTEL, DHAWAN'S INFLUENCE STEMS FROM HIS OMNIPRESENCE AROUND THE PRIME MINISTER. DHAWAN CONTROLS WHO MRS GANDHI MEETS AT HER RESIDENCE, WHERE (AS OPPOSED TO HER OFFICES IN SOUTH BLOCK OR PARLIAMENT WHERE VISITORS GENERALLY GET AT THE MOST FIFTEEN MINUTES) HER IMPORTANT MEETINGS AND DISCUSSIONS TAKE PLACE. HE HAS SKILLFULLY ATTACHED HIMSELF TO SANJAY AND WORKS AS A PURVEYOR OF HIS AS WELL AS MRS GANDHI'S INSTRUCTIONS. HIS MAIN OBJECTIVE IS TO PRESERVE HIS PRESTIGE AND POSITION AS HER CHIEF OPERATIONAL STAFF ASSISTANT. HE WOULD PROBABLY BE TAKING CHANCES IF HE ATTEMPTED T WIDEN THIS "TRUSTED MIDDLE MAN" ROLE BEYOND ITS PRESENT DIMENSIONS.

3. S.S. RAY, D.K. BAROOAH AND RAJNI PATEL: MRS GANDHI HAS CONSULTED OR ENTRUSTED ASSIGNMENTS TO THESE
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THREE POLITICIANS SINCE THE EMERGENCY. EACH HAS BEEN A PERSONAL ACQUAINTANCE FOR DECADES. RAY'S FAMILY ENJOYED TIES WITH THE NEHRUS DATING BACK TO THE 1920'S. MRS GANDHI KNEW PATEL DURING STUDENT DAYS IN ENGLAND.

4. THOUGH IN THE "INNER CIRCLE," EACH IS IN THE "REVOLVING DOOR" SECTION. MRS GANDHI HAS USED THEM FOR THEIR POLITICAL ADVICE, IDEOLOGICAL BALANCE

(BAROOAH AND PATEL) OR FOR FUND RAISING. THEY CAN LOOK BACK TO SEVERAL GENERATIONS OF PREDECESSORS - L.K. JHA, D.P. MISHRA, P.N. HAKSAR, D.P. DHAR - WHO HAVE COME AND GONE. THOSE WITH ESPECIALLY CLOSE PERSONAL TIES TO THE PRIME MINISTER, SUCH AS FELLOW KASHMIRI BRAHMINS HAKSAR AND DHAR, HAVE NEVER COMPLETELY FALLEN FROM GRACE. OTHERS LIKE MISHRA FADED FROM NATIONAL SIGNIFICANCE.

5. ACCORDING TO A SOURCE PRIVY TO THE WORKINGS OF THE "INNER CIRCLE", RAY HAS BEGUN TO SEE LESS OF THE PRIME MINISTER. BAROOAH STILL SEES HER WHENEVER HE WISHES, BUT SHE DOES NOT "LET HER HAIR DOWN" WITH HIM. THERE ARE STILL RUMORS HE MAY SOON BE TRANSFERRED TO A NEW JOB IN DELHI OR GO TO MOSCOW AS AMBASSADOR.

6. CONCURRENTLY, ACCORDING TO THE SOURCE, HARAYANA CHIEF MINISTER BANSI LAL AND PUNJAB CHIEF MINISTER ZAIL SINGH HAVE BECOME FREQUENT VISITORS AT THE PRIME MINISTER'S RESIDENCE. BOTH ARE RIGHT OF CENTER. BOTH HAVE BUILT A REPUTATION OF RUTHLESSNESS AND GUILF IN RUNNING THEIR RESPECTIVE STATES. WE ARE ATTEMPTING TO CONFIRM THIS INFORMATION, BUT OFFER IT NOW AS AN INDICATION OF THE TRANSITIVENESS IN THE "INNER CIRCLE."

7. ASIDE FROM HER POLITICAL ADVISORS. MRS GANDHI OFTEN TURNS TO SPECIALISTS FOR ADVICE AND RECOMMENDATIONS. THESE PEOPLE ARE ESSENTIALLY TECHNOCRATS IN THEIR OWN AREAS. THEY INCLUDE SUBRAMANIAM AND PAI ON ECONOMIC MATTERS AND KAO AND RUSTONJI ON INTELLIGENCE AND SECURITY MATTERS.

8. WE ARE POUCHING TO DEPARTMENT PHOTOS OF RAY,
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PATEL AND SANJAY. STILL ATTEMPTING TO LOCATE PHOTO OF DHAWAN.
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